

GAME FACE

INDIANS SCOREBOOK MAGAZINE

Omar Vizquel

More Than
A Great Glove

Photo: Gregory Drezdson

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JULY 1999 GF (VIZQUEL)



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Photo: Gregory Drezdzon



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Mr. Respectable

by **Tim Fancher**

Travis Fryman, four-time American League All-Star and devoted husband and father of two, arrived in Cleveland on December 1, 1997. A three-player deal with the Arizona Diamondbacks sent **Matt Williams** to Arizona in exchange for Fryman and LHP **Tom Martin**.

Travis' arrival brought the Tribe one step closer to that chemistry-filled lineup that **John Hart** and **Mike Hargrove** hope to ride to a World Championship. Over the past two seasons in Cleveland, Travis is hitting a solid .281, with 35 HR in 190 games.

An Early Love for Baseball

As with many youngsters, Travis' fondness for baseball was evident at a young age. His parents recall that when he was just three, he could name the entire starting lineup of the Reds. (Travis grew up in Lexington, KY, just south of Cincinnati.)

"Defensively, I am more consistent. Right now, I believe that I'm playing about as well as I can play."

— Travis Fryman

Travis had early hopes of a career as a professional athlete perhaps because he was raised in a sports-oriented family. His father was a basketball coach for 25 years.

"At the age of five, playing baseball was what I desired to do," Travis recalls. "It wasn't until after my senior year of high school that I realized I had the ability to make my dream come true."

He was selected 30th overall in the June 1987 draft by the Tigers and would later spend the first eight seasons of his professional career in Detroit.

A passion for baseball that had been growing since the age of three and an excellent work ethic powered Travis through the ranks of the Detroit Tigers farm system. He spent only three and a half years in the Minors — a relatively short stint for most big leaguers.

Fryman made quick stops in Bristol, Fayetteville, London, and Toledo before reaching the Majors.

His arrival did not go unnoticed. He was named the Tigers *Rookie of the Year* in 1990 by the *Detroit Broadcasters Association*.

Self-Analysis

Asked if he is a better hitter or fielder, Travis explains, "Defensively, I am more consistent. Right now, I



Photo: Gregory Drezdson

believe that I'm playing about as well as I can play. I may be as solid as any third baseman in the game today.

"Offensively, I've been consistent from year to year, but over the course of a season there have been some inconsistencies," he explains. "I'm working on my offensive skills and know there is room for improvement."

For Travis, 1998 was a solid year. He hit .287 with a career-high 28 HR and 96 RBI. Coming to Cleveland and playing in this tremendous environment may have something to do with that. "Any time you are part of a winning organization with great players, the level of your play should be elevated," says Fryman. "The chemistry we share is great."

Travis' most memorable baseball moment came in 1998, when his

teammates selected him to unveil the Tribe's fourth-straight *Central Division Champs* banner to the fans at Jacobs Field. It's important to Travis to be a good teammate and gain the respect of his peers. He always plays hard and is devoted to putting forth his best effort.

Being in Detroit for eight seasons allowed #17 to create a treasure trove of memories. "I loved playing at the old ballpark. That was a beautiful place to play. I've had the best of both worlds," he explains. "Tiger Stadium is the best of the old ballparks and Jacobs Field is the best of the new facilities in the game today. To play in a ballpark like this, full of fans every game, helps you feed off that energy over the course of the year. It allows you to play with a greater amount of intensity."

It is true that athletes enjoy the new ballparks and playing before sellout crowds like those which are synonymous with Jacobs Field. Travis believes more franchises will try to emulate Cleveland in the future.

"Soon you will see more teams trying to mold themselves after the Tribe, because of the great situation that Dick Jacobs has created here," Fryman noted. "The situation in Detroit is such that they have chosen Cleveland as

"We've got a chance to do something special this year . . . There is not a team in the world that we can't beat."

—Travis Fryman

a model for their new facility — Comerica Park."

Let's Go!

To most baseball fans, the Indians are the team to beat in the American League this season. With one of the best records in baseball, the Tribe is well on the way to its fifth straight AL Central crown. At the time of this article, the Indians were leading the American League in batting average, RBI, extra base hits, slugging, and on-base percentage. Playing with that in the back of his mind, Travis is very excited about the possibility of his first World Series appearance.

"To this point in the season, we are a better team than in 1998. We have great chemistry on this club. We got along well last year, but there is something unique about this bunch of guys," states Fryman. "We've got a chance to do something special this year, and I won't be surprised if we win the World Series. There is not a team in the world that we can't beat."

More Than an Athlete

Travis, along with **Jim Thome**, was selected to be the honorary co-chairman of the *United Way Home Run Derby*. "The Indians are a civic-minded organization, and that's most likely due to the fact that we've had so much success — along with much support from our fans," Travis believes. "As a local businessman, Mr. Jacobs is very involved in giving back to this wonderful community."

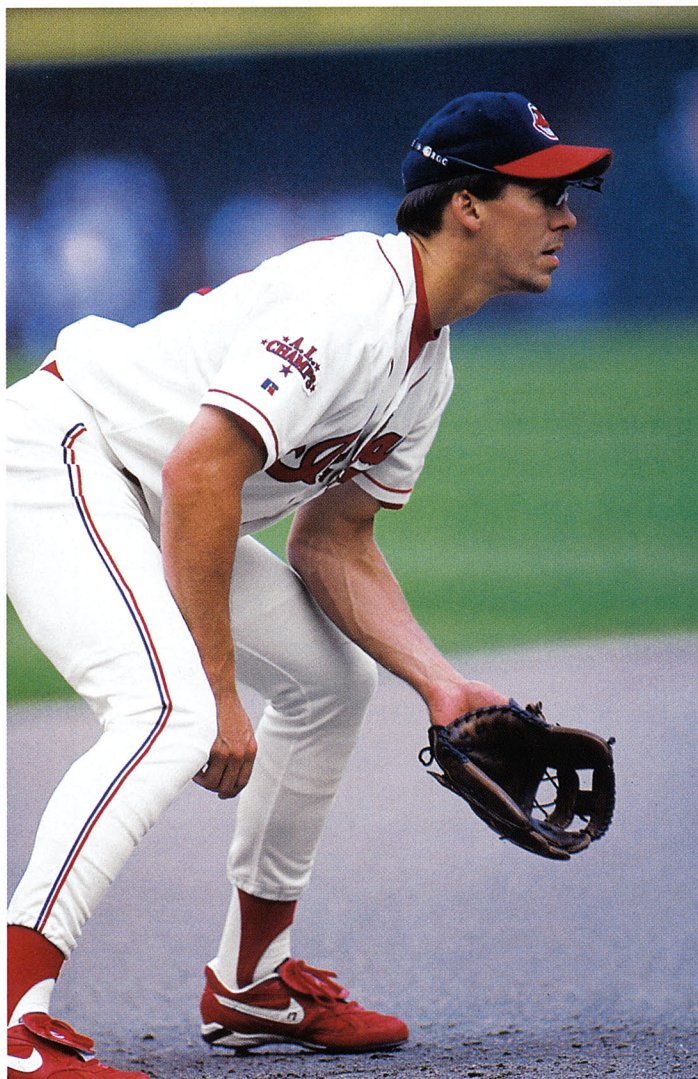


Photo: Gregory Drezdson

Fryman gives the Indians a Gold Glove and an All-Star arm at third.

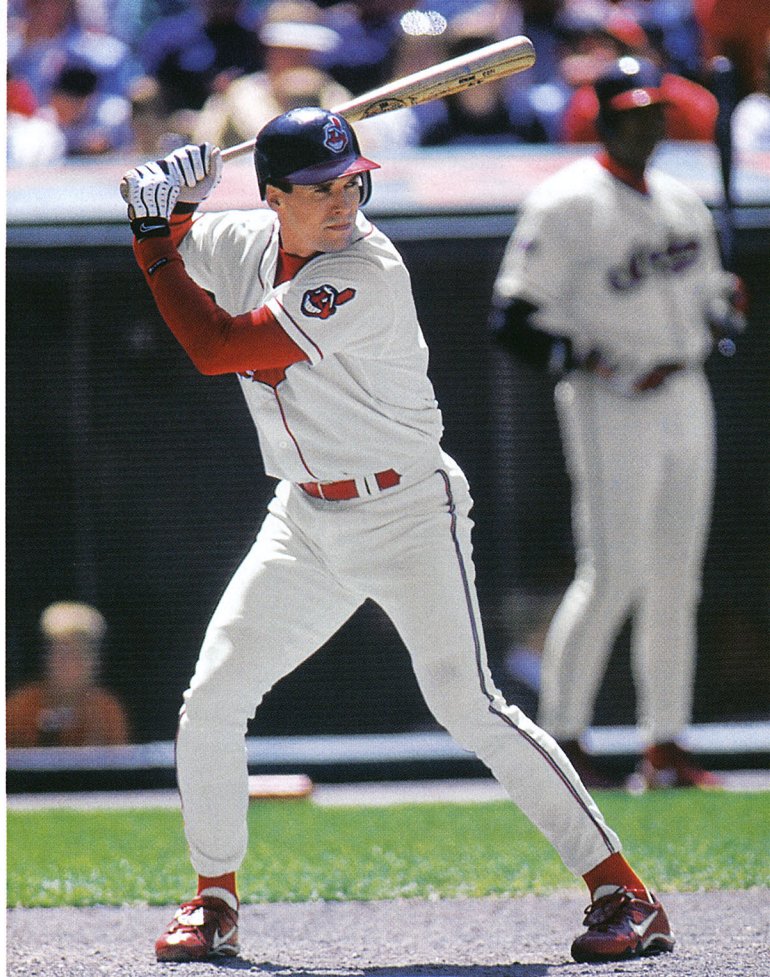


Photo: Gregory Drezdson

Along with the United Way Home Run Derby, Travis has represented the Indians at several youth rallies right here at Jacobs Field. The *Fellowship of Christian Athletes* and *Youth for Christ* each hold rallies throughout the season. Travis, as well as Tribe Closer **Mike Jackson**, has spoken at both rallies on several topics, but two that he and Jackson hold in especially high regard are *character* and *integrity*.

How difficult is it to juggle the responsibilities of being a husband, a father, and a professional athlete?

"This profession creates very unique stresses on the family. My wonderful wife is a single parent for eight months," Travis explains. "All summer long we come and go, so it's important to be blessed with a great wife. When I'm away from the ballpark during the season, I try not to take part in too many extracurricular activities that take me away from my wife and kids."

Travis and **Kathleen** have a special bond that gives the couple a chance to make their relationship work. They actively participate in *Baseball Chapel* and other programs connected with Major League Baseball that have a similar focus.



Indians Béisbol en Español

Saturday and Sunday home games have a different sound this season as Allen Davis and Luis Torres return to the broadcast booth for Indians Béisbol en Español! The remaining dates of the 26-game schedule will be broadcast in Spanish on select stations* on our broadcast network. Tune in pregame at 12:37PM for a 1:05PM start — 7:37PM for an 8:05PM start. The broadcast schedule includes the following dates:

Sat. June 5	vs Chicago Cubs	1:05PM	Sun. Aug. 1	vs White Sox	1:05PM
Sun. June 6	vs Chicago Cubs	1:05PM	Sat. Aug. 14	vs Baltimore	1:05PM
Sat. June 19	vs Seattle	1:05PM	Sun. Aug. 15	vs Baltimore	8:05PM
Sun. June 20	vs Seattle	8:05PM	Sat. Aug. 28	vs Tampa Bay	1:05PM
Sat. July 3	vs Kansas City	1:05PM	Sun. Aug. 29	vs Tampa Bay	1:05PM
Sun. July 4	vs Kansas City	1:05PM	Sat. Sept. 18	vs New York	1:05PM
Sat. July 10	vs Cincinnati	1:05PM	Sun. Sept. 19	vs New York	1:05PM
Sun. July 11	vs Cincinnati	1:05PM	Sat. Oct. 2	vs Toronto	1:05PM
Sat. July 31	vs White Sox	1:05PM	Sun. Oct. 3	vs Toronto	1:05PM

* **WDLW 1380 AM** (Lorain/Cleveland) and **WASN 1330 AM** (Youngstown).

Cleveland Television Network Channel 47 and **Media One — Channel 28** (Lake County).

Internet users are welcome to log on to www.indians.com for the audio feed to these games.

"¡NO PIERDAS NI UNA JUGADA!"

Friday Lunch Parties at Jacobs Field!

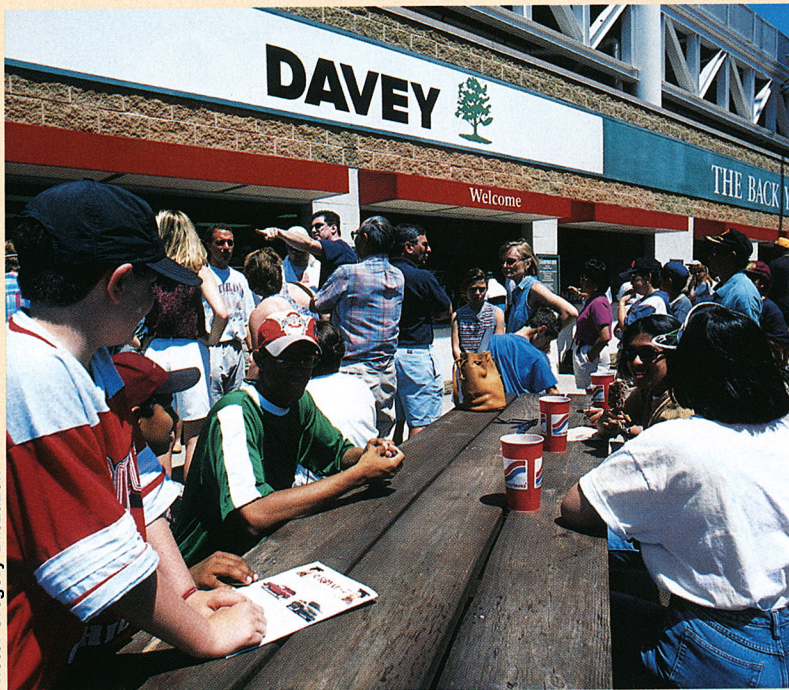


Photo: Gregory Drezdson

Downtown lunch-goers are welcome to enjoy the **Davey Tree Back Yard Lunch Parties** during the Indians 1999 baseball season. Each Friday through August 27 (excluding July 2), the Back Yard at Jacobs Field will offer food, music, and lots of fun for all. Gate C, near the Bob Feller statue, will be open between the hours of 11 AM and 1:30 PM.



NEWSRADIO WTAM 1100 will broadcast live during the Friday Lunch Parties, and guest stations **WMVX**, **WMJI**, **WMMS**, and **WGAR** will also be on-site to join the action on select Fridays throughout the summer.

See you at the ballpark!

Did you ever wonder what it's like to be the voice of the Cleveland Indians?

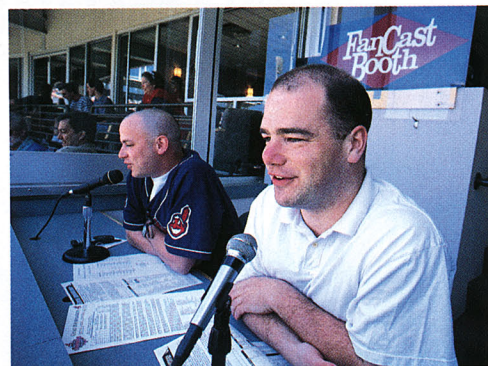
Here's your chance!

Visit the



FanCast Booth

- ◆ Call an inning of Tribe Baseball, just like Tom Hamilton, Dave Nelson, and Mike Hegan — complete with a broadcast booth view and press materials.
- ◆ All proceeds benefit Cleveland Indians Charities.
- ◆ Cost is \$30 for two broadcasters — \$20 for one (price includes an audio tape for each broadcaster and does not include game ticket).



Photos: Gregory Drezdson

Reservations: Please call the Community Relations department at (216) 420-4262 or stop by Guest Services, Section 116, during any home game and become a Major League broadcaster.



Jacobs Field Ground Rules

Baseball's most important pitch this season won't come from a mound. In an effort to combat drinking and driving, Major League Baseball, together with the Techniques for Effective Alcohol Management (TEAM) coalition, continues to make a comprehensive appeal to fans this year. The message: **PLEASE DON'T DRINK AND DRIVE!**

As part of the TEAM program, each Major League club reviews its alcohol policies and runs public service announcements asking fans to drink responsibly and warns them against the consequences of drinking and driving.

The Cleveland Indians want you safe, because we want you back. Please drink responsibly.

In an effort to make everyone's visit to the Ballpark as safe and enjoyable as possible, a list of guidelines has been developed.

The Indians ask that you follow these guidelines, or be subject to ejection from the Ballpark, and in some cases, subject to criminal prosecution by the Cleveland Police Department.

To ensure that each game is a pleasant experience for each and every guest, the Indians have established the following **"Ground Rules:"**

"It is our intention to make our home a safe, comfortable, family-oriented facility so every trip to Jacobs Field is most enjoyable."

**— Dennis Lehman,
Indians Executive Vice
President of Business**

- Jacobs Field is a non-smoking facility with designated smoking areas. Non-smoking areas include: the entire seating bowl of the Ballpark (including the outdoor seating of Suites and Club Seats); KidsLand; and all public rest rooms. Smoking is permitted in the following areas: Back Yard; Patio area on the Main Concourse; all three concourse levels (Main, Mezzanine, and Upper Deck) on the East Ninth Street side of the Ballpark and Upper Deck pavilion area on the Carnegie side of the Ballpark (all of these locations are open-air areas with picnic tables, concession stands, and rest room facilities nearby); Bleacher Concourse on the Eagle Avenue side of the Ballpark. In addition, the Terrace Club and Club Lounge have both smoking and non-

or carry obscene, political, or commercial messages. Banners may be hung from the facing of the Upper Deck. Poles and sticks are strictly prohibited.

- Fans may bring small umbrellas into Jacobs Field as long as they do not interfere with other fans' enjoyment of the game. Large golf umbrellas are discouraged.
- Cameras and video recorders are permitted. However, any resale of the photography or video is strictly prohibited. Team name, logos, and players' likenesses are all copyrighted material.
- Persons observed breaking the law (eg. using illegal drugs, or drinking alcohol underage) will be subject to immediate ejection and/or criminal prosecution.



Photo: Gregory Drezdton

smoking areas. Jacobs Field has signage identifying designated smoking areas for your convenience.

- Cans, glass bottles, plastic beverage containers, thermos bottles, and squeeze bottles are not permitted into Jacobs Field.
- Due to security concerns, hard-sided coolers and containers are not permitted. Soft-sided containers and coolers are permitted.
- Food items and juice boxes are permitted inside the Ballpark, provided they are not inside a hard-sided cooler or container.
- Pets are not allowed inside the Ballpark. However, guide dogs for persons with sight disabilities are permitted.
- The resale (scalping) of Indians tickets is strictly prohibited and subject to prosecution by the Cleveland Police Department.
- Fans are permitted to bring and display banners, provided they do not interfere with the game, obstruct the view of fans,

- Persons using obscene or abusive language, or engaging in any other antisocial conduct offensive to those around them, will be asked by Indians personnel to cease this conduct. If the offensive conduct persists, those involved will be ejected from Jacobs Field.

- Persons entering the playing field, throwing or attempting to throw objects onto the field, will be subject to immediate ejection from Jacobs Field and/or criminal prosecution.

If you have any questions, comments, suggestions, or problems, please visit one of the Guest Service Centers located at Section 121 of the Main Concourse and in Section 519 of the Upper Concourse, or see one of our hosts throughout the Ballpark. The Indians thank you for your cooperation.

MORE THAN A GREAT GLOVE

by Jim Ingraham



Photo: Gregory Drezdon

Omar Vizquel still remembers the day. Still remembers the remark. Still remembers who said it. He'll never forget it. In many ways it was the day that changed his life forever.

This was back in Venezuela. Vizquel was 16 years old, and passionately in love with the game of baseball.

He was also not very big.

And then . . .

"One day a guy told me that I was too small and didn't have a good enough arm to play baseball. He told me I should be a jockey," says Vizquel, still annoyed today at the memory of it. "Those were the words that really got me going. That was my biggest inspiration as a kid to make it to the big leagues."

A jockey?

Fortunately Vizquel ignored that bit of advice — and the rest is history. Baseball, not horse racing, history.

The greatest defensive shortstop of this generation never really considered pursuing a career in anything but baseball. Omar Enrique Vizquel, from Caracas, Venezuela, can't ever remember wanting to do anything else.

"For me it was always baseball," he says. "I like all the sports, and

played all the sports growing up. But baseball was always number one."

As a child, Vizquel ate, drank, and slept baseball — literally.

"When I was eight years old, if I had a Little League game the next day, I would sleep in my uniform," he said. "And I'd put a ball in my baseball glove, then wrap it up with string, and put it under my pillow while I slept."

Vizquel says he can't ever remember not liking baseball, and his passion for the game is as great now as it was as an eight-year-old.

"I still love everything about the game, even now," he says. "I love coming to the ballpark, hanging out in the clubhouse, being around the guys, and playing the games. It's all good. Baseball has given me a chance to get paid for doing what I love to do most. A lot of people don't have jobs where they have a chance to do what they want to do every day. But I'm lucky. I do."

Vizquel's enthusiasm for the game and his infectious personality became readily apparent to Indians fans from the day he played his first game with the team.

Vizquel's first game in an Indians uniform was also the first game in the history of *Jacobs Field*. It was opening day 1994. Vizquel was

acquired by the Indians following the 1993 season in a trade in which the Indians sent **Felix Fermin** and **Reggie Jefferson** to Seattle in exchange for Vizquel.

"That trade totally shocked me, because I had not heard any rumors or anything that I might get traded," he said.

"I'd say Seattle probably traded him at the time because they were



Photo: Gregory Drezdson

looking for someone with more offensive numbers," says Indians hitting coach **Charlie Manuel**. "Now I'd say they didn't look at him long enough."

Indeed, Vizquel's batting averages in his first three years with the Mariners — from 1989-91 — were .220, .247, and .230. His batting average for his five years in Cleveland is .282, and he's developed into enough of an offensive player that this season he hits No. 2 in baseball's most prolific lineup.

"I've got a saying I tell our hitters: *'Know thyself'*," says Manuel. "It means: know what kind of hitter you are, and don't try to do something you're not capable of doing. Omar is that kind of hitter. He knows what kind of hitter he is,

"That trade totally shocked me, because I had not heard any rumors . . . that I might get traded."

— Omar Vizquel regarding his move to Cleveland prior to the 1994 season

Vizquel (pictured above and at left) has unquestioned expertise with a glove, but he is also a threat at the plate and on the base paths.

and that's a singles and doubles hitter, who can hit the ball to all fields. He's really worked hard and studied hitting and made himself into a very good hitter."

Defense?

The glove has always been there. In Cleveland. In Seattle. In Venezuela. Always.

Vizquel was born and raised in Caracas. He and his brother **Carlos** were baseball players right from the start. Vizquel's father, **Omar Sr.**, would come home from work and take the two boys out to a nearby field where he would hit grounders and pitch batting practice to them until it got dark.

Omar played Little League baseball, and actually started out as a second baseman — or at least he tried to.

"I always wanted to be a second baseman," said Vizquel, "but my first coach said, 'You're a shortstop'."

And not just an ordinary shortstop.

By the time he was 13, Vizquel was already opening eyes. “My coach told me I was going to be something special,” he said. “That was the first time I realized I might have a chance to do something in baseball.”

There were other sports that occupied Vizquel’s childhood — like soccer. Although he downplayed his interest in the sport (“I was good, but I didn’t take it seriously because I knew there was a better chance of having a career in baseball.”) others have since seen the benefits of Vizquel’s brief fling with soccer.

“Omar has tremendous athleticism,” says Indians infield coach **Brian Graham**. “And I think a lot of that comes from playing soccer as a kid.”

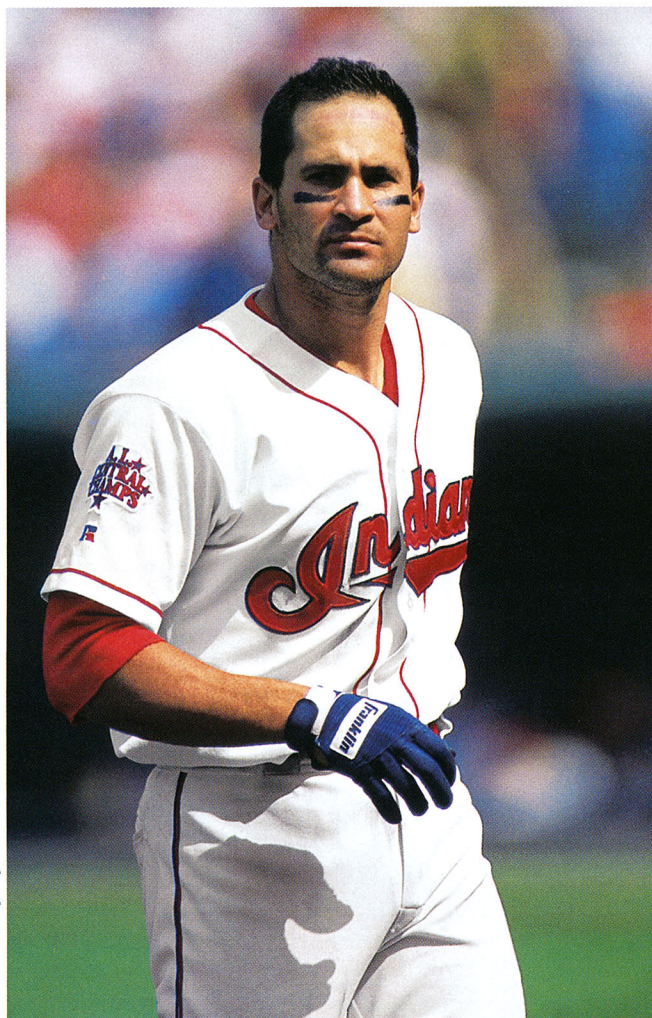
Graham says people who watch Vizquel only from the waist up are missing a great show. “Omar has such great hands,” Graham says. “But people overlook the fact that he has tremendous feet, and I think he got that from playing soccer. If you watch him, Omar’s feet are always underneath his body. He has great balance and agility. And it’s his great feet that put his hands in a position to make plays.”

Vizquel also played basketball in high school. “I was pretty good,

“Omar has such great hands. But people overlook the fact that he has tremendous feet . . . it’s his great feet that put his hands in a position to make plays.”

—Indians Infield and First Base Coach Brian Graham

Photo: Gregory Drezdson



too,” he says. “I was fourth in my league in scoring in high school. But baseball was always number one. Baseball was always my top priority.”

Amazingly, Vizquel was so good so soon that at age 14 he was offered a contract by a professional team in Caracas. “But my father wouldn’t let me sign it, because he said I was too young,” Vizquel said.

Two years later, Caracas came calling again, and this time Omar’s father relented, allowing Omar to sign.

However, his career with Caracas was a brief one. In fact, it never got off the ground. “The coach for Caracas had told a scout from Seattle named **Marty Martinez** that he should come see me play,” said Vizquel.

Martinez did. Immediately.

“At my first workout with Caracas, Marty signed me,” said Vizquel.

He then experienced the ultimate in culture shock. He went from Venezuela to the Mariners’ rookie league team — in Butte, Montana. He was barely 17 years old.

Asked to recall his first impression of Butte, Vizquel laughs. “I visualized the United States being a lot different from Butte,” he says. “I remember thinking to myself, ‘I should have stayed in Caracas.’ But we didn’t care about the town. We just wanted to play ball.”

Vizquel lived in a house with eight other Latin players. “We actually had a lot of fun that year,” he says.

Maybe that’s because Vizquel hit .311, coupled with the fact that he and his friends had no idea about how long the odds were for any of them to reach the big leagues.

“When you’re just starting out in professional baseball, you don’t realize anything about how hard it is going to be to get to the big leagues,” he said. “It wasn’t until I made it to Double-A that I began to get an idea of how few players from the Minors ever make it to the Major Leagues.”

Vizquel was one of them. But it took five full years in the Minors



before he made his Major League debut with the Mariners in 1989.

"It's funny, but I never got discouraged through it all," Vizquel said. "At each level I went to, my game got better. Then when I made it to Triple-A and played against guys there who had been in the big leagues, I realized that they were no better than me."

Vizquel's first Major League hit was a single off Oakland's **Storm Davis** in 1989. His first Major League home run was off Toronto's **Jimmy Key** on July 23. He would go 512 at-bats before he hit his second homer.

Vizquel made it to the big leagues for good in 1991. At the time he hit only right-handed. But following the 1991 season he went to the instructional league to learn how to become a switch hitter.

"**Bobby Tolan**, one of our coaches, suggested it," he said. "It was really tough learning, but in the end it helped my career."

While defense always came natural to Vizquel, offense wasn't always as easy. "Improving my hitting was always my biggest concern," he said.

Slowly but surely, however, as Vizquel's career has evolved, his skills as an offensive player have improved to the point now where he is a very important cog in the Indians' offensive machine.

"I think because of all the other great hitters we have in our lineup,

"With Omar's knowledge of the game, and with him being a switch hitter, he's the ideal No.2 hitter."

— Indians Hitting Instructor Charlie Manuel

Vizquel's career fielding percentage of .982 is the highest in Major League history for any shortstop with at least 1,000 games played.

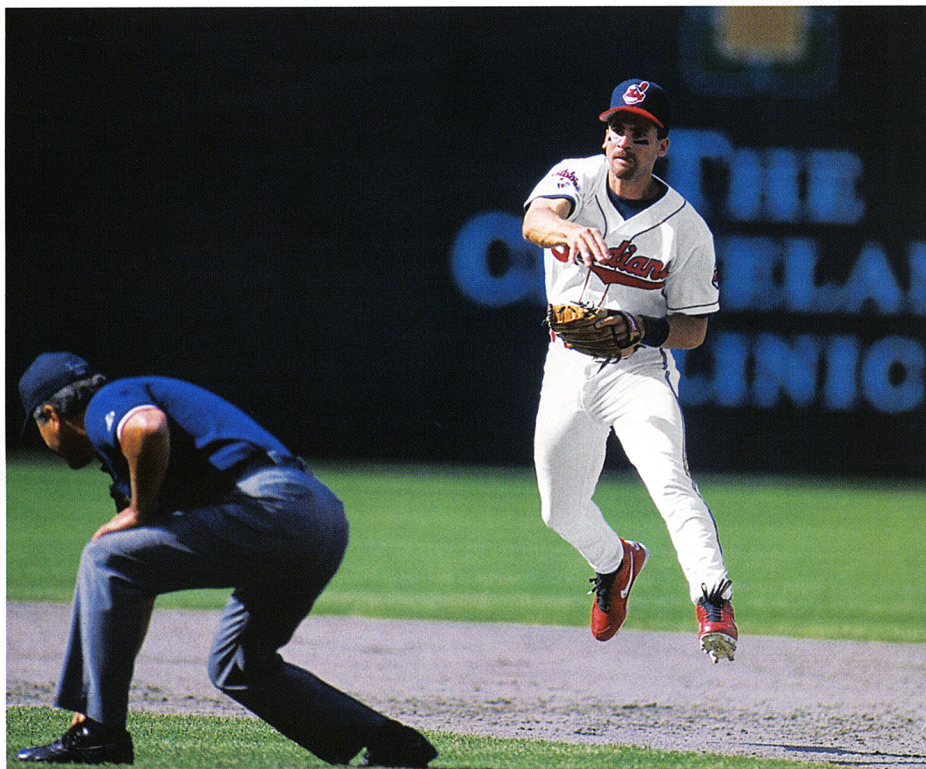


Photo: Gregory Drezdson

Omar's offense frequently gets overlooked," said Manuel.

Not by Manager **Mike Hargrove**, however. Hargrove made the decision at the start of this season to hit Vizquel in the No.2 hole in the lineup, right behind leadoff hitter **Kenny Lofton** and just ahead of No.3 hitter **Roberto Alomar**.

"With Omar's knowledge of the game, and with him being a switch hitter, he's the ideal No.2 hitter," said Manuel. "A good No.2 hitter has to be able to handle the bat, move the ball around, pull it if he needs to move a runner, bunt, and be patient enough to take pitches so the leadoff hitter can steal a base. Omar can do all that. And he can steal bases, too."

And he's been successful at all that even though he's wearing what many feel to be an unlucky uniform number. Vizquel has worn No.13 since reaching the big leagues with Seattle. The number is in honor of former Cincinnati Reds shortstop **Dave Concepcion**.

"He was my idol as I was growing up," said Vizquel. "It's funny, but I

had this big poster of him on the wall next to my bed when I was a kid. It was of him jumping in the air and throwing to first on a double play. A couple years ago they took a picture of me for a poster, and if you look at the two of them together, the pose in my poster is exactly the same as his. I wasn't trying to do it just like Concepcion, but that's the way it came out."

However, Vizquel says stylistically he and Concepcion are apples and oranges as shortstops. "I'm probably a little flashier than he was, but he had a better arm," Vizquel said. "He was the shortstop who first made that play



where he would go into the hole to field a ball, jump up, and throw a one-hopper off the artificial turf to first."

Last year Vizquel had one of the greatest defensive seasons any shortstop has ever had. He led all

"A good No.2 hitter has to be able to . . . move the ball around, pull it . . . bunt . . . Omar can do all that. And he can steal bases, too."

— Charlie Manuel

Major League shortstops with a .993 fielding percentage, the second highest single-season fielding percentage by a shortstop in Major League history, behind only Cal Ripken's .996 in 1990.

Indians fans love to watch Omar's show — from seemingly impossible catches to graceful, leaping throws — he's the consummate shortstop.



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Vizquel has won six consecutive *Rawlings Gold Gloves*. Only three other shortstops have won more: **Ozzie Smith** (13), **Luis Aparicio** (9), and **Mark Belanger** (8).

Vizquel's career fielding percentage of .982 is the highest in Major League history for any shortstop with at least 1,000 games played. Last year he had streaks of 70, 54, and 39 consecutive errorless games.

"Shortstop is an angles and hops position," said Graham. "You get

a good angle on the ball and pick a good hop to play. To get a good angle and a good hop, you need good feet. Omar has great feet."

And although he's considered small, Vizquel is bigger than most people realize.

"I wouldn't mind managing some day."

— Omar Vizquel

"He's bigger than he looks," said Graham. "He has a prototypical middle infielder's body, but he's also a tremendous athlete. If you see him with his shirt off, he's one of the best-conditioned athletes on this team."

Vizquel was selected to his first All-Star team last year, which was no small feat given what is becoming a Golden Age for shortstops in the American League. New York's

Derek Jeter, Boston's **Nomar Garciaparra**, and Seattle's **Alex Rodriguez** are all spectacular young players, who have turned shortstop, which was once considered the game's premier defensive position, into an offensive position.

Vizquel's offensive numbers, as good as they are, don't compare with the monster numbers put up by Jeter, Garciaparra, or Rodriguez. But Vizquel's defensive numbers are as dominating in their own way as the other players' offensive numbers.

Indeed, in one sense, Vizquel is

responsible for 100 RBI per year: the 50 he drives in and the 50 he prevents with his glove.

Vizquel, however, marvels at the offensive numbers the three younger shortstops are producing. "They are hitting machines," he said. "It's unbelievable. Everyone is hitting the ball out of the park."

At age 32, Vizquel probably still has several good years ahead of him. He keeps himself in terrific shape, and his contract with the Indians runs through the 2002 season.

"He's bigger than he looks. He has a prototypical middle infielder's body, but he's also a tremendous athlete."

— Brian Graham on Omar Vizquel

After that? Who knows?

"I wouldn't mind managing some day," Vizquel said. "But I haven't thought much about what I want to do after baseball."

That's because he's still having too much fun playing it. It is, after all, the game he's played all his life. The only game he really took seriously. The only game he's ever wanted to play.

"If I ever lost my desire to play baseball, I'd get out," Vizquel said. "But I still love the game. It's a great job."

And it beats being a jockey.



Vizquel has been a catalyst in the Indians lineup — usually by way of a single and excellent base running. But he can surprise opposing pitchers with power. Below he is congratulated by teammates after a grand slam.

Photo: Gregory Drezdson





Einar Diaz: Right at Home...

by **Andrew Hayek**

Imagine that you were a star catcher in the Minor Leagues who has made the jump to the Majors, but your new role is that of backup. How will you adjust? Can you deal with the pressure of backing up a fan favorite, franchise player like **Sandy Alomar, Jr.**?

These "for instances" are reality for Indians catcher **Einar Diaz**. Despite the circumstances, Einar maintains a positive attitude for his first full season with the Tribe: "I feel good right now. I have worked a lot of years to get here, and I am happy to be a backup."

"He is very athletic, has a strong arm, and is very agile."

— Infield Coach Brian Graham on Einar Diaz

Einar *has* worked hard. But is being a backup catcher in the Majors as fulfilling as being a starter in the Minor Leagues?

"That's a good question," he states. As an answer he adds, "Everybody wants to play in the Majors — *no matter what* — you want to be in the big leagues."

Like many of his peers, Einar did not know when his big opportunity would arise. That opportunity — to play as *starting* catcher — came when Sandy Alomar, Jr. had to undergo unexpected knee surgery in the second month of the season. While some rookie players would not be capable of adjusting to a starting role, fans, teammates, and coaches would agree that Einar has done a terrific job.

"He's a plus, and we are lucky to have him," noted **Jeff Newman**,



Photo: Gregory Drezdson

third base coach. Newman also pointed out that the past few years the Indians have had very experienced backup catchers, including **Junior Ortiz, Tony Pena, and Pat Borders**. "This is the first year we have ever gone with a rookie as our backup, and I can't think of another catcher that I'd rather have than Einar Diaz."

However, Einar's success did not come overnight, but rather through a lot of hard work and dedication. Einar began his career

An athlete since childhood, Diaz used to split his time between soccer and baseball.

in 1991 with the Tribe's Dominican Summer League program. After a series of farm team assignments and back-and-forth visits to Cleveland, Einar is now enjoying his first full season in Cleveland.

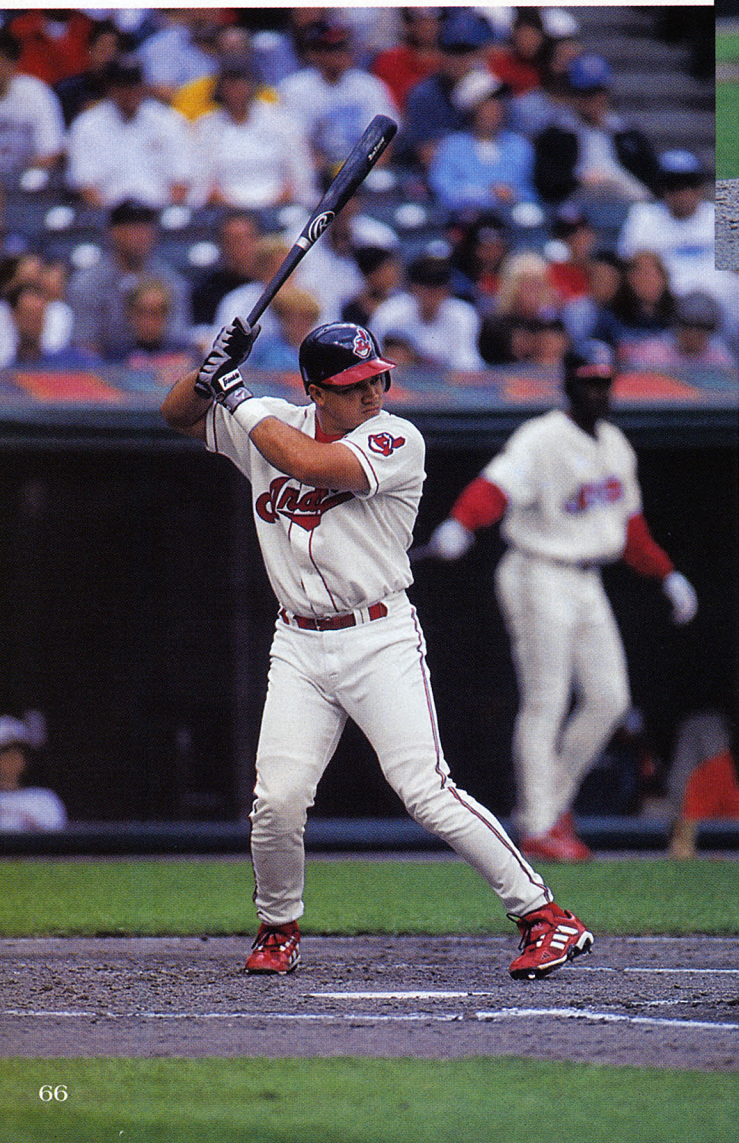
Einar has made it a point to be physically ready — even when not

a starter. He explains, "I never stop. If you work a little harder, you'll be in shape all the time."

Brian Graham, Indians first base coach, describes Einar as a player with good physical skills. "He is very athletic, has a strong arm, and is very agile."

Coach Graham had the opportunity to watch Einar develop when he served as manager for the 1997 AAA Buffalo Bisons. The former manager recognizes that Einar has made tremendous strides: "The most impressive thing to me is how he's matured both as a player and as a person. He's come a long way."

Einar demonstrates his maturity by taking an active role in his growth. Coach Newman further describes Einar as a player who wants to learn: "He's a quick learner. He asks questions in all the meetings and is learning to take a more active role."



Photos: Gregory Drezdson, both

The path Diaz has taken to become the Indians backup catcher is unique. Tribe fans may not know that Einar did not begin his professional baseball career as a catcher. Einar explains, "I played third base and shortstop one year, and the following year the coach changed my position."

"At first it was a bit difficult. Now that I'm here, I think the change was a good thing."

Einar's athleticism stems back to his childhood in Chiriqui, Panama where he enjoyed playing soccer as well as baseball. However, once he signed professionally, he put away his soccer ball to concentrate on baseball.



Diaz adjusted to great change after entering the Minors — switching from third base/shortstop to catcher. His current challenge is to learn the nuances of calling pitches.

What or who inspired him to choose baseball over soccer? Einar smiles broadly as he recalls the exploits of his childhood idol, Dave Parker (who you may recall was a strong-armed outfielder and power hitter for the Pirates). "When he threw toward home, he was always right on target," Einar says.

Adjusting to the Roll of Starter

The next step for Einar is to gain the confidence and respect of his teammates, which can only come over time.

Brian Graham believes, "The things he'll learn from here on out will come through experience." Graham adds, "He needs to learn to call a game." To that end, Einar has been fortunate to catch virtually the entire staff of Indians pitchers this year.

Sandy Alomar, Jr. recently noted when explaining his own development that it can take two to three years to develop the ability to call a good game.

In addition, there are other developments Diaz can make over time. Newman suggests that as well as learning the hitters, a catcher must also get to know the

Jeff Newman feels that once Sandy returns as the starter, the Tribe will not hesitate to call on Einar . . . "With the experience he's gaining . . . he'll have all the confidence in the world."

opposing managers and what they are thinking.

"With experience, the pitchers will learn to have more confidence in him — just as they do with Sandy," remarks Newman.

Because of similar cultural backgrounds, Einar seems to connect best with pitchers Bartolo Colon and Ricky Rincon. As time progresses, Newman is certain he will make this same connection with the other pitchers.

As the season continues, the direction of Einar's role with the Indians remains uncertain. Diaz understands the difficulty of maintaining his status as a big league player. "The hard part is you don't know where you'll be."

But you would never know this from watching Einar on and off the field. He focuses his energy on becoming the best possible player he can be today, without worrying about what tomorrow will bring.

Jeff Newman feels that once Sandy returns as the starter, the Tribe will not hesitate to call on Einar in any situation. "With the experience he's gaining if we do need to call on him, he'll have all the confidence in the world."

Along with his responsibilities to the Tribe, Diaz is a devoted husband and father. While playing baseball in the Carolina League, Einar met his wife, **Leslie**. They have one child, **Einar Antonio, Jr.**, who turned two in April. Although they do not currently reside in Cleveland, Einar is anxious to have them join him soon.

In the off-season, Einar and his family enjoy a visit to Panama before traveling to Venezuela to play in the Winter League.

As Diaz continues to improve as a player, will the day come when he considers himself a role model? He hesitates for a moment and says, "I think I'll let the fans, the coaches, and my teammates decide that."



Photo: Gregory Drezdson

Newman suggests that as well as learning the hitters, a catcher must also get to know the opposing managers and what they are thinking.

"With experience, the pitchers will learn to have more confidence in him — just as they do with Sandy."

How To Score A Game

Baseball fans can enjoy the sport to the fullest extent by keeping track of the game and pinpointing those big plays that bring victory or defeat. All you need is a basic knowledge of the rules.

Although there are countless scoring methods, experts use a simple code based on numbering players by position and tracing action through the use of symbols. It's easy and fun.

In fact, why not devise your own scoring system with the basic suggestions on this page.

One such suggestion on player substitutions is to use a heavy or wavy line under or over a box to indicate a change, either of a player or batter.

If a batter flies to the rightfielder, merely use the figure 9. If it is a foul fly, use 9F.

Now that you are an official "scorer," you can really enjoy baseball games.

TEAM	Pos.	1	2
Rightfielder	9	4-6 W	
2nd Baseman	4	3 ④FO	
1st Baseman	3	==	
Centerfielder	8	SF 8	
Designated Hitter	DH	K	
Leftfielder	7		4-6
Catcher	2		DP 4-6-3
3rd Baseman	5		===
Shortstop	6		7
Pitcher	1		
TOTALS	R H	1 1	1 2

Walked and was forced out at second (second baseman to shortstop)

Reached first on fielder's choice when runner was forced out, advanced to third on a double by 3rd place hitter, scored on 4th place hitter's sacrifice fly.

Doubled; did not advance further.

Flied out to center field scoring runner on third.

Struck out — end of the inning.

Singled; later forced out at second (second baseman to shortstop in first half of double play).

Hit into double play (second baseman to shortstop to first baseman).

Hit home run.

Flied out to leftfielder — end of inning.



Photo: Gregory Drezdson

Can You Score The Play Above?

The ball was hit to the second baseman, who threw it to the shortstop. The shortstop was able to force out the runner who had been at first. He then threw the ball to the first baseman to get the batter out, turning a double play.

Can You Read This Scoring Example?

The hitter reached first base on a walk, stole second, advanced to third on a pitcher's balk, and scored on a wild pitch.

BK	SB
WP	W

Use Symbols As Shorthand...

Single	—
Double	==
Triple	===
Home Run	====
Error	E
Foul Fly	F
Double Play	DP
Fielder's Choice	FC
Hit by Pitcher	HP
Wild Pitch	WP
Stolen Base	SB
Sacrifice Hit	SH
Sacrifice Fly	SF
Caught Stealing	CS
Passed Ball	PB
Balk	BK
Struck Out	K
Base on Balls	BB
Forced Out	FO
Intentional Walk	IW

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Enjoy the Best While
Watching The Best...

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

by Jeff Sibel

Bzzzzzz.

Time to get out of bed.

Brush your teeth.

Shower.

Drink a cup of coffee.

Eat breakfast and read the paper.

Off to work.

Sound Familiar?

It's a little bit different for the members of the Cleveland Indians. Granted, these guys don't have to get up early in the morning, or be at work by 8:00AM. Then again, they work in front of nearly 43,000 people, day-in and day-out, and their office is Jacobs Field.

The clubhouse is the player's sanctuary. Before BP, music blares over the sound system as reporters rove around conducting interviews.

So exactly how does a player get ready to perform in front of a sold-out crowd every night?

On game days at Jacobs Field, most players will arrive five or six hours before the game is scheduled to start. Meaning that for a 7:05PM start, players will begin to arrive at the ballpark around 1:00 or 2:00PM.

Why so early? Because before they step onto the field, each player must not only be ready to play physically, but mentally as well.

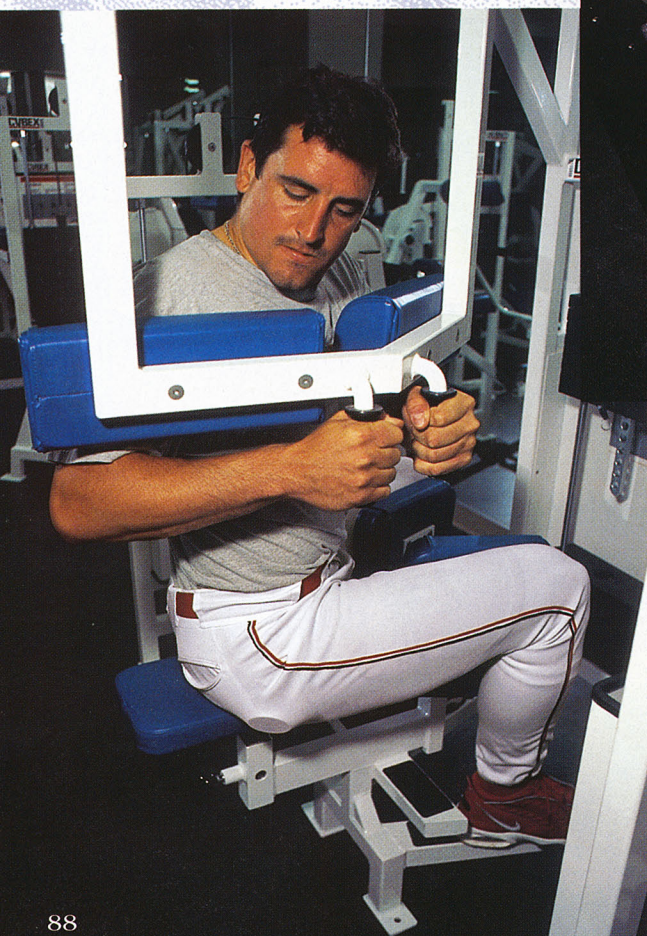
"Normally, I sleep in late, and get to the ballpark at about 1:30 or 2:00PM, says Indians rookie **Richie Sexson**. Although I really don't have a set routine, I pretty much do the same thing every day. I get treatment if I need it, or else just hang out in the training room with Scuzzy (Indians trainer **Paul Spicuzza**) and the other guys, before I get changed for BP (batting practice) at 3:30. You try to relax and stay loose before BP, because afterwards you need to focus and get yourself ready to play."

There are many things a player can do inside the 17,000 square foot home clubhouse at Jacobs Field. Players lift weights in the world-class weight room and work out in an aerobics room. Five batting cages allow for indoor BP. To relax, players can watch television in a comfortable lounge. Coaches and players can also utilize a state-of-the-art video facility to view and break down game film.

The clubhouse is the player's sanctuary. Before BP, music blares over the sound system as reporters rove around conducting inter-



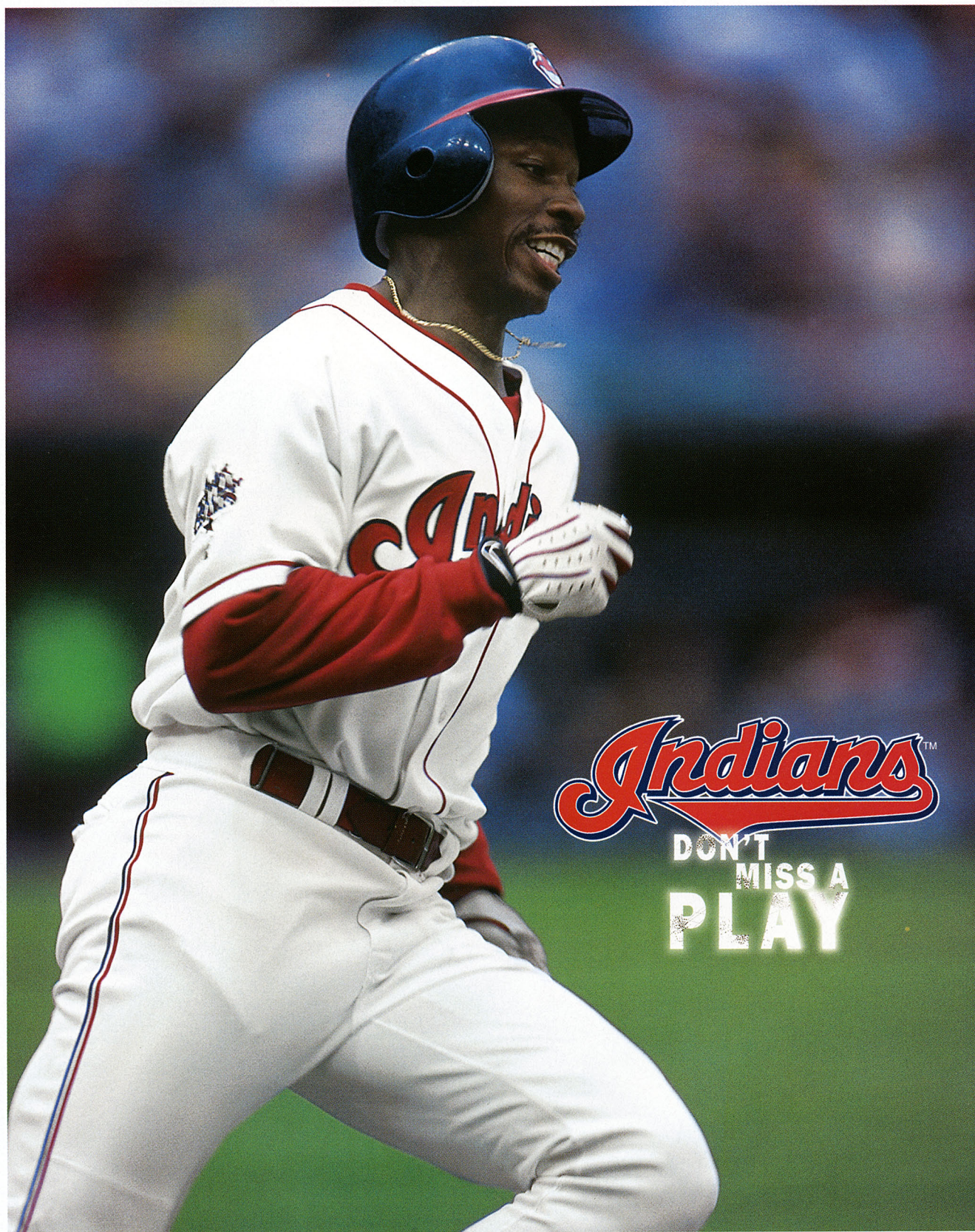
Players try to relax, loosen up, and work out before batting practice. Indians pitcher Dave Burba, like his teammates, uses his time in the clubhouse to both relax (above) and train with weights (at left).



Photos: Gregory Drezdson, both



1999 Cleveland Indians



Indians™
DON'T
MISS A
PLAY

Photo: Gregory Drezdson

**Richie
SEXSON****44**Age: 24; born Dec. 29,
1974 in Portland, OR**Position:** In/OutfielderBats: R Throws: R
Ht: 6'7" Wt: 210**Paul
SHUEY****53**Age: 28; born Sept. 16,
1970 in Lima, OH**Position:** PitcherBats: R Throws: R
Ht: 6'3" Wt: 215**John
SMILEY***Disabled List***57**Age: 34; born Mar. 17,
1965 in Phoenixville, PA**Position:** PitcherBats: L Throws: L
Ht: 6'4" Wt: 210**Jim
THOME****25**Age: 28; born Aug. 27,
1970 in Peoria, IL**Position:** InfielderBats: L Throws: R
Ht: 6'4" Wt: 225**Omar
VIZQUEL****13**Age: 32; born Apr. 24,
1967 in Caracas, Venezuela**Position:** InfielderBats: S Throws: R
Ht: 5'9" Wt: 170**Enrique
WILSON****35**Age: 24; born July 27, 1975
in Santa Domingo, DR**Position:** InfielderBats: S Throws: R
Ht: 5'11" Wt: 170**Jaret
WRIGHT****27**Age: 23; born Dec. 29,
1975 in Anaheim, CA**Position:** PitcherBats: R Throws: R
Ht: 6'2" Wt: 230



Bottom of the Ninth

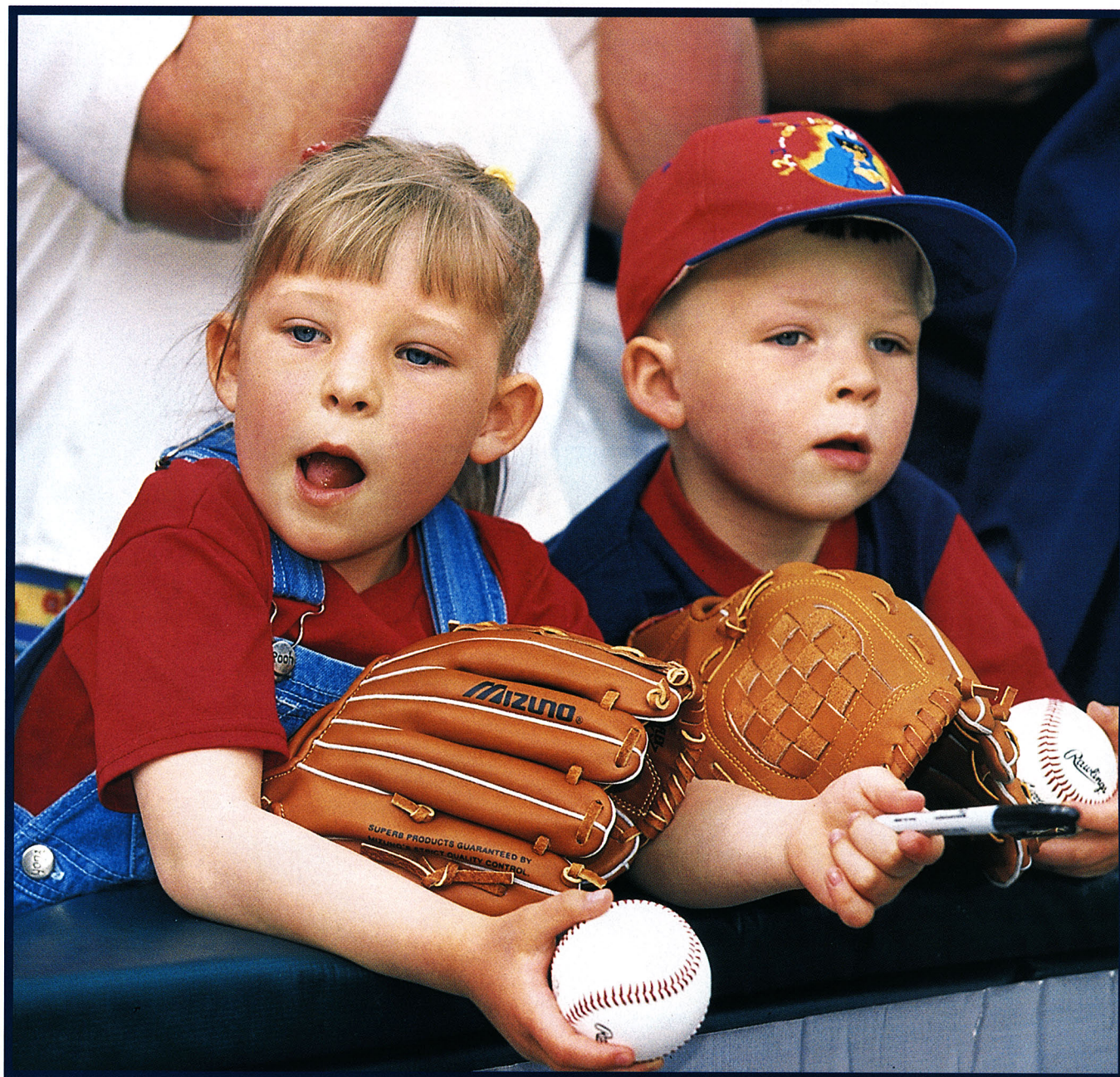


Photo: Gregory Drezdson

**“Hey guys,
who wants to be
next?”**

**“Boy . . . these
guys are
a w e s o m e !”**